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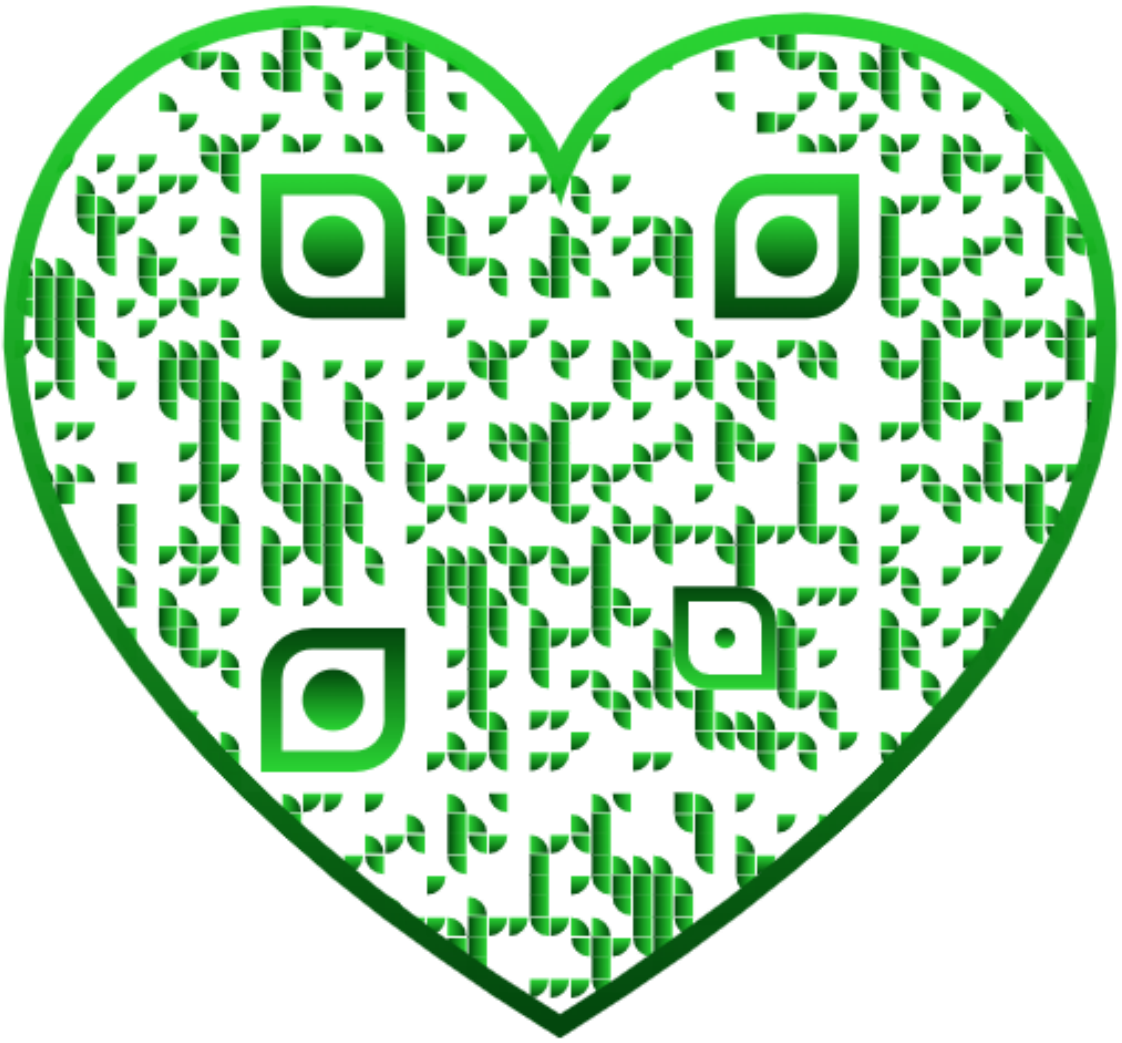
NME

VO5 NME AWARDS 2017 SPECIAL

PET SHOP BOYS

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH NME'S 2017 GODLIKE GENIUSES + ALL THE WINNERS FROM THE NIGHT OF THE YEAR



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NME

Hello...

BY THE TIME YOU read this, the VO5 NME Awards will be done and dusted for another year. I'm writing this on Tuesday afternoon, sat on the balcony at the O2 Academy Brixton while down below me Bands 4 Refugees smash through their rehearsal of 'Gimme Shelter', the track they'll perform the next night to raise awareness of the work of the brilliant charity Help Refugees. The vocals from Years & Years' Olly and Black Honey's Izzy are literally sending shivers down my back. Go and watch the full performance now at NME.com/awards, and text REFU to 70700 to help.

This week's issue is dedicated to the awards and features all the winners, all the action and an exclusive interview with our usually tight-lipped Godlike Genius recipients Pet Shop Boys. If you missed any of it on the night itself, go to our website to watch all the live performances and see all the pictures from backstage.

This is going to be a massive year for us all, for so many reasons, and it's exciting to see what will unfold, both from a music perspective but also how the world will respond to the predicament it finds itself in. Choose love, people.

MIKE WILLIAMS
Editor-in-Chief
@itsmikelike

Maggie Rogers p25

COVER STORY

14 Pet Shop Boys

A deep and fascinating journey through over three decades of Godlike Genius

FEATURES

18 VO5 NME Awards 2017

For starters: Christine & The Queens, Dua Lipa, Skepta, M.I.A., Glastonbury, Frank Ocean, The 1975, Bastille, Biffy Clyro, Metallica, Fleabag. And more!

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CONTENTS PHOTO: JACK HENRY BRIDGLAND. COVER PHOTO: STEVE NEAVES

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AGENDA

WHAT EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT THIS WEEK

Rocking for refugees

Bands 4 Refugees helped raise awareness and money at the VO5 NME Awards 2017

Bands 4 Refugees in rehearsal. (From l-r): Sam Koisser (Peace), Austin Williams (Swim Deep), Dom Boyce (Peace), Isaac Holman (Slaves), Joe Falconer (Circa Waves), Pixie Geldof, Harry Koisser (Peace), Izzy Phillips (Black Honey) and Olly Alexander (Years & Years)

PHOTO: ANDY HUGHES

ONE OF THE MANY highlights of the VO5 NME Awards 2017 was a supergroup of indie's finest coming together to rock for refugees. Bands 4 Refugees formed late last year after a charity gig arranged by London band Wolf Alice, and features Charli XCX, Pixie Geldof, Marika Hackman and members of Years & Years, Swim Deep, Black Honey, Slaves, Circa Waves and Peace. A year on – given the Brexit vote, and the Government's scrapping of its child refugee scheme – their cause is more vital than ever. "It's easy to think your elected leaders will sort things out," says Years & Years' Olly Alexander, "but we need to make our voices heard."

On stage at the O2 Academy Brixton, they tore through a cover of The Rolling Stones' 'Gimme Shelter' to help raise awareness and money for the ongoing refugee crisis.

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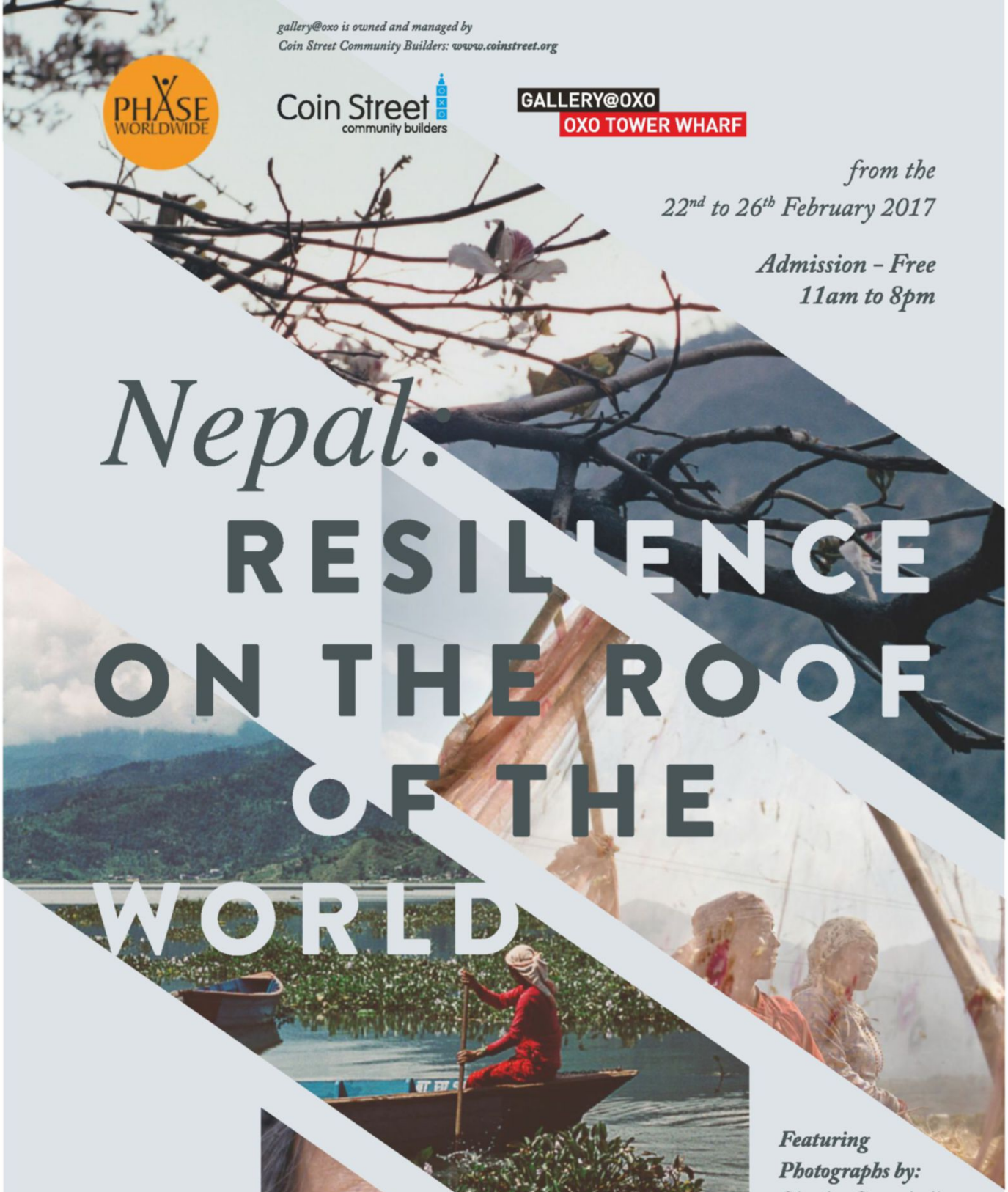

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Feelgood hits for the summer

Kasabian's Serge Pizzorno on what to expect from their sixth album

WORDS: ANDREW TRENDELL. PHOTOS: NEIL BEDFORD, REX FEATURES, GETTY IMAGES

TRACKS THAT TOOK 10 MINUTES TO WRITE
"I took last summer off and did a bit of living. It was great. I had the most amazing summer, then I added a few songs to the ones I'd already written for the album and they only took about 10 minutes to write. They were those dream tracks that really write themselves. It all just took it to the next level."

TRACKS WITH GUITARS ON
"I fell in love with the guitar again. I was listening to ESG and Talking Heads and in that kind of world, then it just took on a life of its own. I just wanted to make a guitar record that was relevant and important. It's been a while since that happened. We always react against our previous work. I did massively experimental synth work on the last record [2014's '48:13'] so I just looked at my Rickenbacker in the corner of the studio and thought, 'That's what I'm gonna do.' I just started smashing out tunes on that."

TRACKS WITH GREAT LYRICS
"I've got to say, these are the lyrics that I'm most proud of. I've got some beauties on this album. I tried to keep it really simple, but there's some really twisted, dark comedy on there too. There'd be so many good T-shirts out of the lyrics on this album."

TRACKS THAT ARE A REACTION AGAINST THE WORLD
"It's weird because last year I was making music, I got married and Leicester won the league. It was the best year of my life, but the whole world was crumbling. It's pretty mental. There's this vision of me in a studio, surrounded by vintage synthesisers, that's still standing perfectly but the rest of the world is just f**king bust. I wrote a proper feelgood album that will come out in the summer. It's just pure positive and the complete opposite of what's going on at the moment because that's where I was as a human being. This was my reaction against the rest of the world."

Kasabian's new album is out this summer. They're headlining Reading & Leeds and Glasgow's new TRNSMT Festival

Kasabian (l-r): Christopher Karloff, Serge Pizzorno , Tom Meighan, Chris Edwards

"It's the complete opposite of what's going on in the world"

GOOD WEEK

EMMA STONE
Won Best Actress at the BAFTAs as the world continues to go gaga for *La La Land*.

BLUE IVY
The internet went all heart-eye emoji when she attended the Grammys dressed as Prince.

JAMES CORDEN
The host was hopeless in a "guess the lyric" game show. This man does *Carpool Karaoke*!

NICK GRIMSHAW
Lost around half a million listeners from his Radio 1 show over the last year. Sounds grim.

BAD WEEK

VO5
NEW
MATT REWORK
FOR DRY AND DAMP
MATT FINISH
HOLD
Heat Protect Spray
FOR ULTRA GLOSSY FINISH
230°C HEAT DEFENCE
200mL
Ultimate Hold Hairspray
24HR WEATHERPROOF • UBER
HOLD • EASY TO BRUSH OUT
HOLD
400mL/277g
Mega Hold Gel Spray
FOR SMOOTH STYLES
24HR FRIZZ CONTROL
200mL
MEGA HOLD
STYLING GEL
24HR EXTRA STRONG CONTROL
INDESTRUCTIBLE LOOKS
HOLD
200mL
GIG READY HAIR
VO5 NME AWARDS 2017
150mL/146g
ORK PUTTY
MESSY TEXTURE
ALL DAY REWORKABLE HOLD
HOLD
EXTREME STYLE
VO5
MATT CLAY
75mL/85g
SCULPTED TEXTURE
CHOPPY MATT FINISH
HOLD
NEW
VO5
Express

Nazi nightmares

In new BBC One drama *SS-GB*, World War II is over – but Hitler won and he's occupied London. Executive producer Sally Woodward Gentle explains how they transformed the city into a dystopian Nazi nightmare for the show

INTERVIEW: THOMAS SMITH. PHOTOS: REX FEATURES, GETTY IMAGES

Did you draw on any real-life plans the Nazis had for London?

"We didn't actually see any real ones. But we researched what type of bombs were dropped before and after the Battle of Britain. So we spent quite a long time thinking which buildings would still be standing if they'd won the Battle of Britain."

How did you stop people freaking out about seeing Nazi symbols while filming?

"We tried to minimise the use of swastikas in public as far as we possibly could. We got hyper-neurotic about it, even down to the pennants on the front of cars or a little bit of embossing on the top of a pillar."

That must have been so difficult to manage...

"We didn't want anything to cause offence because it's such evil imagery. We didn't want to be playing with it, and we didn't want to expose anyone to it either. When there were German soldiers on set, in between takes we covered them in ponchos."

What kind of changes did you have to imagine?

"Our production designer's view was that the Nazis would've taken things that were quintessentially British and rebranded them. So the red telephone boxes become yellow. The map symbol for the tube would've changed."

Why do you think that people have the appetite for stories like this now?

"I've been developing this for a few years, and I didn't think there was an appetite. I think what's happened since is that we're now living in an alternate world, with Brexit, Trump and Boris. We know, as well, that fate can turn really easily. It's terrifying."

***SS-GB* starts Sunday February 19 at 9pm on BBC One**

Sam Riley stars in *SS-GB* as Detective Archer

Meet the lead

You'll recognise Sam Riley from the following

CONTROL *2007*
In which he played the late, great Joy Division frontman Ian Curtis.

BRIGHTON ROCK *2010*
As the young but brutal Pinkie Brown in this adaptation of the classic Graham Greene novel.

ON THE ROAD *2012*
Few could play the role of Sal Paradise from Jack Kerouac's legendary book with such effortless cool.

Last W33K IN NUMBERS

20
Disco balls unveiled globally, via which Katy Perry fans could hear her new song 'Chained To The Rhythm'.

£534.55
Drake's bill at Nando's in Leeds. He reportedly ordered nothing above medium heat.

3
The holy trinity of Miles Kane, Alex Turner and Lana Del Rey sang 'Tiny Dancer' at karaoke.

1
Jewel-encrusted hip flask on show at the Grammys, courtesy of Rihanna.

Awesome Austin adventures

It's the Live Music Capital Of The World® – and so much more

IN THE HEART OF TEXAS sits a weird and wonderful paradise: Austin. It's known globally for its incredible music scene – from the venues of buzzing downtown hotspot 6th Street to festivals like SXSW and Austin City Limits – but there's so much more to the city, from food and urban adventures to vintage shopping, sports, amazing art and one hell of a nightlife scene. Read on and start planning the trip of a lifetime.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Austin is fast becoming a foodie hotspot, with everything from swanky restaurants to a buzzing food truck scene. Vegans will be in dairy-free heaven at The Beer Plant; for a Mexican munch, Torchy's Tacos is legendary; and artisan hot dogs can be found at Frank. For artery-busting fried chicken, Lucy's will do the business. Korean/Mexican fusion truck Chi'lantro is a must and East Side King's street food is mind-blowing.

GET SPORTY

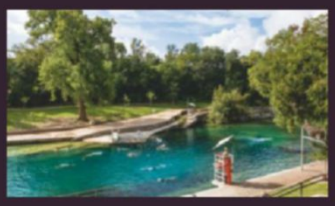
Since the building of the Circuit Of The Americas track in 2012, Austin has been the US home of Formula One racing, with the United States Grand Prix taking place there every year. If you're after something a little different, then tailgating at a University of Texas football game is about as American as you can get.

ALL NIGHT LONG

Fans of nightlife are in for a treat in Austin. It's not quite the city that never sleeps but it certainly doesn't get much rest. The bars of 6th Street are legendary, with pool tables galore at Buffalo Billiards, speakeasy sass at Midnight Cowboy and Easy Tiger's sweet waterside patio. But be sure to venture further afield also to 'honky tonk heaven' with the Broken Spoke.

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

Skip to chilled-out South Congress Avenue – known as SoCo – to find the best vintage stores, like Feather's Boutique. Uncommon Objects is an antiques store like no other – get everything from taxidermy to old photos and costume jewellery at this rummaging mecca.



SWIM IN THE CITY

Barton Springs Pool is a gorgeous place to spend a sweltering day and take advantage of Austin's hot weather. Fed by underground springs, the outdoor swimming pool is open from 5am until 10pm and there are shady, grassy banks so you can chill out with a book or drift off listening to music. Bliss.

Visit austintexas.org for more information

PHOTOS: BARBERSTOCK, GETTY IMAGES

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THIS WEEK

Tune back into radio – it's a music lover's paradise

EXCUSE ME WHILE I REACH for my hankie and dab at the big fat tears currently falling from my eyes, because news that people have fallen out of love with music radio has hit me hard. A new survey has found that over the past five years Radio 1 has lost almost a fifth of its listeners, and while 1Xtra, Radio 2 and 6 Music haven't seen such a substantial drop, it turns out that they too have been haemorrhaging fans as young people turn away from radio in favour of streaming services.

I adore the radio for many, many reasons, the first being sheer laziness. What's nicer or easier than flicking on your preferred station and then being looked after for the next few hours by a kindly DJ who'll introduce you to new things, chatter away without asking for anything in return and sprinkle a decent dose of songs you know and love throughout proceedings? It's a simple joy.

The second is because radio is a place where eccentrics can thrive. One of my most vivid memories of being a little kid is related to the radio. I'm in the car with my mum on holiday in Cornwall. It's dark outside and we're driving down a winding country lane with only the warmly sardonic voice of John Peel oozing out of the speakers for company. One of Radio 1's most iconic DJs, Peel was known for his esoteric – and sometimes utterly mad – taste in music. He loved Aphex Twin, intensely hardcore gabba techno, dub reggae and folk ballads. On that dark night in Cornwall he was playing Half Man Half Biscuit, a bizarre folk-rock band who charmed and concerned eight-year-old me in equal measure. From that moment on I became obsessed with tuning into Peel – who passed away in 2004 – whenever I could. His late-night Radio 1 slot was a magical thing. He'd play records at the wrong speed and there'd be regular bouts of dead air, but it was charming and although I sometimes didn't like the music, deciding whether I did or not was always a thrill.

"Radio is a place where eccentrics can thrive"

But mostly I love radio because it's a true music lover's paradise. For the past few years my go-to has been NTS, a London-based online station founded in 2011. With a seemingly endless run of shows by experts and highly enthusiastic amateurs, it hosts specialist shows in everything from electronica and metal to jazz and grime. You can also stream old shows, making it the perfect halfway home between old school radio and millennial streaming culture. An exceptionally tasteful armchair crate-digger's heaven, I'm currently fond of the old school Nashville tunes played on NTS's Country Hayride show, the heavy, heavy sounds of Black Impulse and the folk, gospel and field recordings of Death Is Not The End. They're shows capable of transporting you to another place and another time – a sign of truly excellent radio – and a reason why you should be tuning in if you aren't already.

@leoniemaycooper

Bradley Zero, DJ with online station NTS

THINGS WE LIKE

THIS WEEK'S OBJECTS OF DESIRE

Cult classic
Prepare yourself for the return of *Twin Peaks* with this snuggly sweatshirt.
£24.95 *nmemerch.com*

Charge your glasses
Get these sunnies on and spring will arrive through the power of positive thinking.
£89 *aceandtate.co.uk*

Bling ring
Goth, glam and glorious, this Alexander McQueen ring is all three.
£145 *libertylondon.com*

Star map
Navigate Han Solo's universe with *Star Wars Galactic Maps*.
***HMV* £9.99 with any purchase in-store only**

Phones for you
Philips Fidelio M2L headphones deliver impressively crisp sound.
£199.99 *selfridges.com*

Slacking off
The Vans Authentic™ Chino – sturdy enough to take you from work to your skateboard.
£65 *vans.co.uk*

Get shirty
Wear this cute blouse and make like Brigitte Bardot circa 1958.
£25 *monki.com*

Sock rock
Stance's Legends Of Metal socks come in Iron Maiden, Slayer and Motörhead styles.
£14.99 *thepriorymenswear.co.uk*

Lip service
3ina's Lip Balm Oil provides your pout with fruity flavour as well as glossy shine.
£7.95 *asos.com*

Graphic scenes
Haddon Hall: When David Invented Bowie is a graphic novel about his early years.
£14.99 *amazon.co.uk*

Coffee club
Marvel's retro comic covers travel mug will keep your drinks piping hot.
£10.99 *truffleshuffle.co.uk*

Hats off
Wear your NBA team allegiance on your head with New Era's official caps.
£18 *neweracap.co.uk*

For lovers
This sweet shirt is a replica of the one Leonardo DiCaprio wore in *Romeo + Juliet*.
£45 *asos.com*

Bone china
Bring a little quirkiness to your kitchen with this skull espresso set.
£20 *nhmshop.co.uk*

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YOUR TOWN. YOUR MUSIC. YOUR STYLE

What's on your Headphones?

THIS WEEK

South Shields

‹ LIAM NORMAN
26, operations assistant

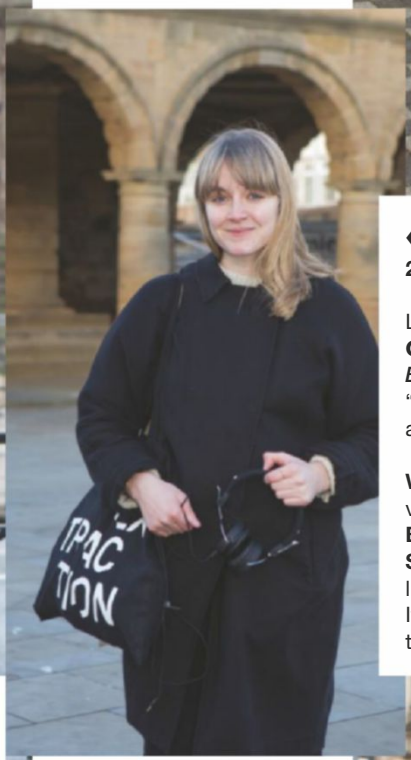
Listening to:
LEE SCOTT
Sunshine
"It's a very homely song that reminds me of here."

Wearing: H&M jacket and hoodie, Wordplay x ThinkZebra sweater, Adidas trackies, Nike cap and trainers.
Best thing about South Shields: "It's great for vegetarian food. One for all you animal lovers out there."

ETHAN ROBERTSON ›
19, student

Listening to:
WOLF ALICE
Silk
"It's on the *T2 Trainspotting* soundtrack. The original film had such a big influence on me."

Wearing: River Island jacket, jeans, boots and hat, Next hoodie.
Best thing about South Shields: "The coastline is beautiful. The vibes in summer are great."



‹ JO HISLOP
26, artist

Listening to:
CHARLES MINGUS
Boogie Stop Shuffle
"My dad used to play it around the house."

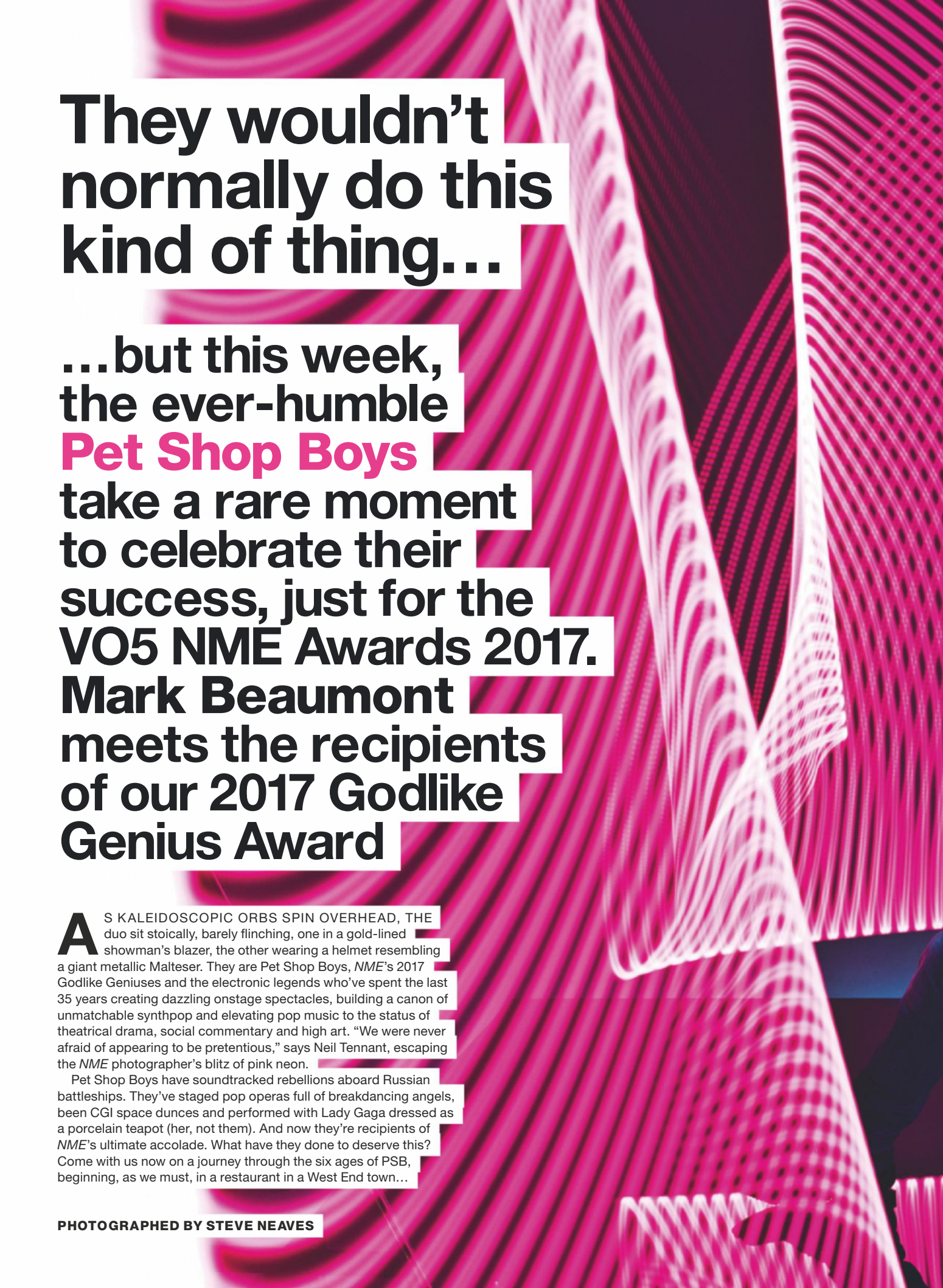
Wearing: Topshop coat, vintage jumper and jeans.
Best thing about South Shields: "There's a new library called The Word. It's a really lovely space to work in."

PHOTOS: DAVID WALA

JADE GRANT ›
27, visual merchandiser

Listening to:
GRIMES
California
"She's really arty and alternative, which I love."

Wearing: H&M hoodie, River Island cardigan, ASOS top, Topshop leggings.
Best thing about South Shields: "Roots Cafe is a really cool vegan place to eat at."



They wouldn't normally do this kind of thing…

…but this week, the ever-humble Pet Shop Boys take a rare moment to celebrate their success, just for the VO5 NME Awards 2017. Mark Beaumont meets the recipients of our 2017 Godlike Genius Award

AS KALEIDOSCOPIC ORBS SPIN OVERHEAD, THE duo sit stoically, barely flinching, one in a gold-lined showman's blazer, the other wearing a helmet resembling a giant metallic Malteser. They are Pet Shop Boys, *NME*'s 2017 Godlike Geniuses and the electronic legends who've spent the last 35 years creating dazzling onstage spectacles, building a canon of unmatchable synthpop and elevating pop music to the status of theatrical drama, social commentary and high art. "We were never afraid of appearing to be pretentious," says Neil Tennant, escaping the *NME* photographer's blitz of pink neon.

Pet Shop Boys have soundtracked rebellions aboard Russian battleships. They've staged pop operas full of breakdancing angels, been CGI space dunces and performed with Lady Gaga dressed as a porcelain teapot (her, not them). And now they're recipients of *NME*'s ultimate accolade. What have they done to deserve this? Come with us now on a journey through the six ages of PSB, beginning, as we must, in a restaurant in a West End town…

PHOTOGRAPHED BY STEVE NEAVES

(L-r:) Chris Lowe and Neil Tennant

PHASE ONE POETRY WITH DANCE MUSIC 1981-1989

Well, OK, a Chelsea electronics shop. Neil Tennant, music journalist, met Chris Lowe, architect and accomplished stander-at-the-back, on King's Road in 1981. Two years later, Neil, in New York to interview The Police, blagged a meeting with prolific pop producer Bobby Orlando. "He said, 'Hey, let's make a record!'" Tennant recalls. "I said, 'You haven't even heard anything yet!' Three weeks later we were back in New York in a studio off Times Square. The first song we played was an instrumental we'd written. I'd subsequently realised you could speak a rap over it, and that was 'West End Girls'. When the first version came out, [writer] Charles Shaar Murray in the *NME* gave it this incredible review, saying, 'As an evocation of glamour and danger it is almost perfect.'"

(L-r:) Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe in the mid-'80s

After a few false starts, 'West End Girls' became a huge international hit in 1985 and Pet Shop Boys emerged as an antidote to the swashbuckling New Romantics. "Our ethos was to make dance records that had the sort of lyrics that didn't get into dance records," Tennant says. "More like the sort of lyrics you got in new wave music or Bob Dylan. Some poetry with dance music."

Politics too. "[Second album] 'Actually' was meant to be a picture of Britain in 1987," Tennant explains. "'Shopping' was inspired by selling off all the nationalised industries, and it ends with the song 'King's Cross', which in those days was a very run-down, dangerous area. We were using that as a metaphor for people that got left out of the new, bright Thatcherite Britain."

From the outside, by contrast, Pet Shop life in the '80s was a riot. They used their vaulting popularity to work with heroes including soul legend Dusty Springfield and Barbara 'Peggy Mitchell' Windsor, and to indulge their high-art ambitions by injecting references to T.S. Eliot and Shakespeare into their songs. Yet Tennant has described this period as a "bitter 24-hour struggle" full of "arguments". Why? "There was so much promotion," he says. "We were pop stars with a Number One hit in America. You could do interviews 24 hours a day and it still wouldn't be enough."

THREE ESSENTIAL PET SHOP BOYS SONGS

'It's A Sin' (1987)
The moment pop turned opulent, 'It's A Sin' remains PSB's biggest ever hit.

'Rent' (1987)
Many favour 'Love Comes Quickly', but this lament of the financially subservient is PSB's finest early ballad.

'I Wouldn't Normally Do This Kind Of Thing' (1993)
From a duo with a Kanye-like approach to smiling in public, this was an unexpected bungee into Eastern psych-pop euphoria.

PHASE TWO SCI-FI ART PRANKSTERS 1990-1994

In the '80s PSB had the brains, they had the looks, but they didn't have the money they needed to play live. It wasn't until 1991 that PSB fully realised their onstage vision. The Performance tour was a surreal cabaret extravaganza featuring pumpkin-headed women, pig bankers and a bit where Lowe sat reading *Playboy* in his pants.

"It was produced to look like an opera," Tennant remembers. "We didn't acknowledge the audience between the songs. We all come on dressed as schoolboys, Chris sits down and all he does in the first song is hold up an apple. It's a very beautiful moment."

In 1993, 'Very' brought candy cane dunce hats and computer-generated videos that looked like Willy Wonka directing *Barbarella*. "It was a reaction to grunge," Tennant says. "The grunge thing was, 'Hey man', letting it all hang out, which was very much not what we are."

"There'd been an explosion in video game technology," Lowe adds, "and we thought it'd be good to look like we were part of a video game."

"We always wanted to be like a cartoon," says Tennant. "To create our own world, a universe of our own that doesn't necessarily apply to everything else that's going on outside. We sort of achieved that with 'Can You Forgive Her', and with 'Go West' we went even further. In the final video, 'Yesterday, When I Was Mad', Chris was just a lamp."

Lowe laughs. "My favourite performance in a video. I didn't even have to turn up."

Their cover of Village People's 'Go West', which Tennant considered "ghastly" until Lowe pointed out it shared a chord progression with Pachelbel's Canon, became their biggest '90s hit. "I never know whether 'Go West' didn't establish such a strong idea of us in the public eye that it became an albatross," Tennant shrugs. "It's such a strong thing, it's difficult to escape from – assuming you want to escape from it. People expect you to do doof-doof, four-on-the-floor and we don't necessarily do that."

PHASE THREE ENTERING THE ESTABLISHMENT 1995-1997

As Britpop smacked its Union Jack Gibson into the knackers of the mid-'90s, the ever-contrary Pet Shop Boys went 'world music'. They toured South America, embraced Latin samba rhythms on 1996's 'Bilingual' and began cosying up to the biggest names in the rock firmament – Tina Turner, Bowie, Elton. But Tennant insists that they were something of a scalpel across the throat of the establishment.

"When David Bowie asked us to do a reworking of 'Hallo Spaceboy', that was a career

high point," he says. "But the song only had one verse and Chris in the studio suggested we cut up 'Space Oddity' to make a second verse – '*Ground to Major bye-bye Tom / Dead the circuit countdown's wrong*'. David Bowie phoned up to ask how it was going and we said, 'We've cut up the lyrics of 'Space Oddity'.' Silence. 'Sounds like I'd better come in.' We completed the Major Tom trilogy: 'Space Oddity', 'Ashes To Ashes' and suddenly 'Hallo Spaceboy'. I said to David Bowie, 'It's like Major Tom is in one of those Russian spaceships they can't afford to bring down,' and he said, 'Oh wow, is that where he is?'"

PHASE FOUR GETTING WEIRD AGAIN 1998-2000

In the late '90s, PSB re-embraced the weird in order to give themselves some alien distance from Tennant's most personal lyrics to date. How weird? They wrote soundtrack music for an eclipse. They re-created the drawing room from *2001: A Space Odyssey* onstage at Creamfields. They sported an android shock-wig look that Chris describes as "a combination of samurais with *The Little Prince*". And, during a residency at the Savoy Theatre in London, they literally leapt from the screens.

"[Artist] Sam Taylor-Johnson came up with this brilliant idea of filming a party with two sofas," Tennant explains. "We're on the sofas and we walk off the sofas and onto the stage while the party carries along on the screens behind us. At the end of the first half we walk off the stage and back onto the screens. It lost £12,000 a night. In effect we were giving every member of the audience £10."

Luckily, PSB have a fairly blasé attitude to cash. "We earn money but we're not super-rich," Tennant admits. "My friends think I'm richer than I am. A close friend of mine was astonished to learn that I got paid a salary. People think that vast waves of money crash over you and it's just not like that. Pop stars now will have a fashion line – the music is just part of the brand. People see themselves as entrepreneurs now. We've never been entrepreneurial. We've always been much better at spending money than making it."

PHASE FIVE INTENTIONAL DOWNSIZING 2001-2007

As the millennium dawned, PSB were in a rarefied position. They'd played their first ever festival show as headliners of Denmark's 130,000 capacity Roskilde Festival. They had their own musical, *Closer To Heaven*, in the pipeline. They'd sold 50 million records and would never again have to rent out a fancy dress costume. They had it all, but Lowe pined for less. So, in 2002, on the back of Blair-baiting, guitar-leaning album 'Release', PSB toured student unions. No s**t. "I always felt our career's gone in reverse order," Lowe says, "so I thought in that case we should end up doing the student circuit, because we'd never done it."

"Our first proper gig in London was at Wembley Arena," says Tennant. "We wanted to reboot the idea of the Pet Shop Boys, to get away from 'Go West'. Famously in 1972 Paul McCartney and Wings got into a van and turned up at student unions saying, 'We're going to do a gig.'"

"Neil drew the line at the van," says Lowe. "And, 'We're not staying at the Travelodge.'"

The duo played the Camden Barfly for War Child and 20 years into their career they did a BBC John Peel session for the first time. "John Peel said, 'If you're having trouble listening to this, just imagine it's an obscure German techno band,'" remembers Tennant.

FAMOUS FAN

BRANDON FLOWERS
The Killers
"I was introduced to a new world of sonic landscape, imagination and sophistication. I've always believed Chris Lowe to be some sort of wizard. Few others have held on to the fire or the ability to remain relevant."

PHASE SIX POP VS ART 2008-PRESENT

In the recent past, PSB have known no creative boundaries. Their high-art leanings have been ramped up to the max with performances of their soundtrack for 1925 Soviet silent film *Battleship Potemkin* in Trafalgar Square, a ballet called *The Most Incredible Thing* and a laser-blasted stint at the Royal Opera House featuring luminous inflatable sumo wrestlers. "Andy Warhol can do an Andy Warhol version of the Mona Lisa," Tennant argues, "so that's our view of pop music."

At the same time, they've keyed into cutting-edge contemporary pop and the visual zeitgeist like never before. "Something started for us when [early-2000s dance scene] electroclash happened in London," Tennant reveals. "We used to go to Nag Nag Nag every week with Sam Taylor-Johnson. That rejuvenated our interest in electronic music. We started doing remixes for people – The Killers, Madonna, Rammstein, Yoko Ono." And performed alongside Lady Gaga dressed as a teapot at the 2009 BRITs? "She said, 'As you're English, I'm going to be dressed as a teapot.' We said, 'Oh great!' She had this very beautiful Wedgwood teapot costume."

Pet Shop Boys will clearly leave the pop world a very changed beast from when they found it – more surreal, cultured, articulate and liable to dress entirely in Ming. And besides their undeniable influence, their Godlike standing is assured by the fact that their music has always been a document of their times. "Someone pointed out to me that our songs are a bit like a social history of Britain during that period," Tennant says. "When the last song is written, whenever that is, I think that will be quite an impressive catalogue of songs that will say something about life in Britain, and indeed the world, in the era."

And when they look back upon their lives, it should be with a sense of omnipotence.

NME

Chris "Our career has gone in reverse order"

STYLING: FRANK STRACHAN. GROOMING: JACKIE TYSON. ADDITIONAL PHOTOS: GETTY, RETNA

VO5 NME AWARDS 2017

You voted, they won. Here are the people who took home trophies from this year's star-studded VO5 NME Awards 2017

BEST INTERNATIONAL FEMALE ARTIST
SUPPORTED BY VO5
CHRISTINE & THE QUEENS

BEST TRACK
SUPPORTED BY Red Stripe
CHRISTINE & THE QUEENS
'TILTED'

Héloïse Letissier explains the meaning behind her breakthrough single

"It's about feeling out of place, not finding your balance, or being depressed even, but with playful images, with a song you can dance to. I was searching for lots of images or words that could fit and I just stumbled upon this word, to tilt or be tilted, and I was exactly trying to find this image. It's literally talking about not finding your balance with a playful image."

BEST NEW ARTIST

SUPPORTED BY TOPMAN

DUA LIPA

Two quick questions for pop's brightest new star

What does your debut album, due out later this year, tell us about you?
"Once the album comes out, I think people will see another side of me. I originally released the songs 'Room For 2' and 'Thinking 'Bout You' just to show how diverse the album is in terms of collaboration. We may have a few surprises, but yeah, it's gonna be really, really exciting."

So it's not out-and-out pop music then?
"I think there's a real singer-songwriter [vibe] where I take a step away from the pop stuff. I mean, what really *is* pop? It's kinda hard to put yourself in a genre. There are some really heartfelt songs. They're very, very personal."

BEST BRITISH FEMALE ARTIST

M.I.A.

The firebrand rapper's five most revolutionary moments

1 THE 'BORDERS' VIDEO
Using shots of real-life émigrés, 2016's 'Borders' shone a light on the plight of those stuck in refugee camps in a way that was unflinchingly real and shot through with urgency.

2 'BAD GIRLS', TOO
As well as being like an alternate dimension version of *Fast & Furious*, the video for 'Bad Girls' (2010) was a comment on women not being allowed to drive in public in Saudi Arabia.

3 THAT TIME SHE PLAYED THE SUPER BOWL
She was Madonna's guest; she stuck her middle finger up to the world's biggest TV audience. The NFL weren't pleased.

4 SAYING WHAT SHE THINKS, ALL THE TIME
Whether declaring the internet is run by the CIA, speaking out for the rebel Tamil Tigers in her native Sri Lanka or forging a friendship with Julian Assange, M.I.A. has never let careerism get in the way of her politics. "I got told, 'You could have been Rihanna if you'd just shut up,'" she told *Rolling Stone* last year.

5 ANNOUNCING HER RETIREMENT... AGAIN
The rapper has threatened to quit the music industry multiple times – and recently declared that 2016's 'AIM' would be her last album. We fans are forever on our toes.

BEST BRITISH MALE ARTIST

SUPPORTED BY PILOT

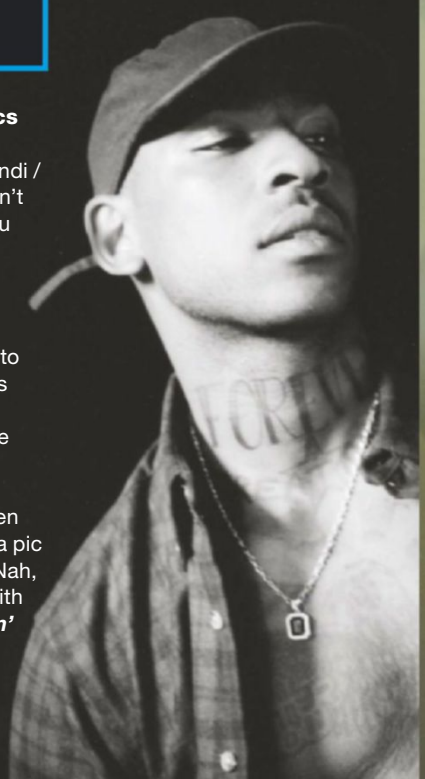
SKEPTA

Three of his greatest lyrics

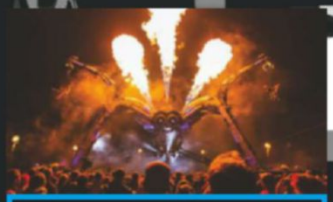
"You tryna show me your Fendi / I told you before, this s**t don't impress me / I bet I make you respect me / When you see the mandem are selling out Wembley" ***'Shutdown'***

"Boy better know man went to the BRITs on a train, think it's a game / Man shutdown Wireless, then I walked home in the rain" ***'Konnichiwa'***

"The first thing you said when you saw me was, 'Can I get a pic for the 'gram?' / I was like, 'Nah, sorry man, I only socialise with the crew and the gang" ***'Man'***



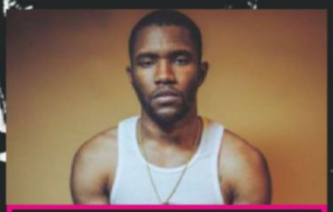
NME AWARDS 2017



BEST FESTIVAL
SUPPORTED BY ID&C
GLASTONBURY

Five moments that made Glasto 2016 hard to beat

1 When Coldplay paid tribute to Viola Beach during their set.
2 Wolf Alice showing just how much they've grown with their Pyramid Stage debut.
3 The euphoria of hearing LCD Soundsystem's 'All My Friends' live again.
4 Alex Turner's dance moves and Miles Kane's surprise sax solo during The Last Shadow Puppets' set.
5 The moshpit at Skepta when he dropped 'It Ain't Safe'. Massive.



BEST INTERNATIONAL MALE ARTIST
SUPPORTED BY VOS
FRANK OCEAN

What famous fans say about the multitalented soul and R&B singer

STORMZY "Genuinely the greatest songwriter of our generation."

KANYE WEST "The album I listened to the most this year is Frank Ocean's. If [it's] not nominated, I'm not showing up to the Grammys."

PETE WENTZ *Fall Out Boy* "It's pretty awesome when you can hear the emotion that goes into songs. 'White Ferrari' is so great."

BEST LIVE BAND
SUPPORTED BY Nikon
THE 1975

Matty Healy breaks down the band's game-changing live shows

MODERN ART INSPIRATION
The 1975's stage set-up is this: four pillars beneath three rectangles of light, different images and colours taking over the columns with each song. Sometimes they're a rich pastel pink. Other times they show a cityscape at night. They're inspired, Matty says, by "James Turrell and [Mark] Rothko paintings and a lot of minimalist art references". Also: "Tumblr".

YOU'LL WANT TO INSTAGRAM EVERYTHING – BUT YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED
Part of the show sees Matty encourage the audience to put their phones away for just one song. That's a lot easier said than done with their incredible visuals – something the frontman is well aware of. "I'm more aware of that [conflict] than anyone," he says. "There's nothing I hate more than someone on stage getting proper miffed with it, being like, 'Oh, put your phones down,' 'cos I get it. I'm just as bad as anybody else."

IT'S LOUD
But not why you'd think. No, the fans scream their lungs out at Beatlemania volume. "It's quite humbling," says Matty. "You don't get used to it. You learn how to deal with it and still be a person. I don't take it for granted."

PHOTOS: ZOE MCCONNELL, BELLA HOWARD, OLIVIA ROSE, ADAM POWELL, DEAN CHALKLEY

Plus these winners...

BEST FILM
MY SCIENTOLOGY MOVIE

BEST MUSIC FILM
OASIS: SUPERSONIC

BEST FESTIVAL HEADLINER
ADELE

BEST SMALL FESTIVAL
END OF THE ROAD

VILLAIN OF THE YEAR
NIGEL FARAGE

HERO OF THE YEAR
BEYONCÉ

WORST BAND
5 SECONDS OF SUMMER

BEST REISSUE
OASIS – 'BE HERE NOW'

BEST BOOK
JOHNNY MARR – SET THE BOY FREE

BEST MUSIC VIDEO
SLAVES – 'CONSUME OR BE CONSUMED'

MUSIC MOMENT OF THE YEAR
COLDPLAY'S VIOLA BEACH TRIBUTE AT GLASTONBURY

BEST ALBUM
SUPPORTED BY hmv

BASTILLE
'WILD WORLD'

How Dan Smith and co stepped up their game for album number two

1 THEY SWAPPED FICTION FOR REALITY
Debut album 'Bad Blood' contained songs taking inspiration from Greek mythology, *Twin Peaks* and ancient Rome. 'Wild World' was far more rooted in reality and modernity. "A lot of it is about that feeling of panic and helplessness and how that's now part of everyday life," frontman Dan told *NME*.

2 THEY COULDN'T HELP BUT BE POLITICAL
Bastille might have shied away from politics in the past, but that changed last year. 'The Currents' is about the rise of populist politicians such as Trump and Farage, while the video for 'Fake It' has a suspiciously David Cameron-like figure delivering the song as if it were a speech.

3 THEY BUILT A DYSTOPIAN MEDIA COMPANY AROUND IT
The fictional WWCOMMS was present across the 'Wild World' campaign, from videos to pop-up shops and arena shows. "We thought it'd be interesting to invent our own Big Brother," says Dan. "It's a comment on the news and the world around us."

4 IT'S NOT AS SERIOUS AS ALL THAT SOUNDS
"When we were making it we were just trying out lots of things and also doing stuff that interested us, but also thinking about putting out something that we really love," says Dan. Luckily, you lot love it too.

BEST BRITISH BAND
SUPPORTED BY ZIG ZAG

BIFFY CLYRO

The Kilmarnock rock trio's biggest triumphs of the last 12 months

A CAREER-BEST ALBUM
The pop hooks and big riffs of 'Wolves Of Winter' and 'Animal Style' meant 'Ellipsis' showcased Simon Neil's songwriting at its finest.
HEADLINING READING & LEEDS A SECOND TIME
Not many bands top the bill at the twin festivals twice in four years. Biffy did.
HIGH-TECH SHOWS
The band took a stunning light show to the nation's arenas at the end of 2016.
A SECOND NUMBER ONE
'Ellipsis' followed 'Opposites' and topped the album charts.
BOOKED TO HEADLINE DOWNLOAD
They'll prove they can still cut it with rock purists at the festival in June.

BEST INTERNATIONAL BAND
SUPPORTED BY Austin

METALLICA

They sent us a video, and Lars Ulrich said this...

"OK! It's three quarters of Metallica hitting you from Copenhagen, Denmark. We're bummed we couldn't be there tonight to join you in all the middle fingering going around the joint, but we're very appreciative of this."

BEST TV SERIES
SUPPORTED BY Domino's

FLEABAG

Four lines that show the dark, sharp heart of the BBC Three comedy

1 "To be fair, she's not an evil stepmother. She's just a c**t."
2 "Dad books us boob appointments once a year, to make sure our t**s don't turn on us like Mum's did. It's a hassle, but at the end of the day it's nice to be touched."
3 "She decided to walk into a busy cycle lane and get tangled in bikes and break a finger maybe. As it turns out, bikes go fast and three people died. She's such a d**k."
4 "Such a sad day. A sad, sad day. I'll get the Champagne."

NME

SEE ALL THE ACTION FROM THE NIGHT, INCLUDING PERFORMANCES FROM BASTILLE, WILEY, DUA LIPA, BANDS 4 REFUGEES AND GODLIKE GENIUSES PET SHOP BOYS, AT AWARDS.NME.COM NOW

Why John Wick is the ultimate badass

Keanu Reeves' assassin shoots back into cinemas in *John Wick: Chapter Two*, the sequel to 2015's cult smash *John Wick*. What an absolute treat

1 HE'S ALL ABOUT HONOUR

In *John Wick: Chapter Two* Reeves' enigmatic assassin is forced out of retirement by a scheming Italian gangster who wants a more powerful family member murdered. Bound by a blood oath, John Wick jets to Rome to deliver the hit that will save his honour – and his life.

2 HE RAISES THE STAKES

John Wick: Chapter Two has even more of the heart-stopping action, thrilling visuals and effortless cool that made the first film a word-of-mouth hit. But now, John Wick's actions have cross-continental repercussions. When he returns to New York, every hitman in town wants him dead.

3 HE DOESN'T TAKE HIMSELF TOO SERIOUSLY

And neither do the films he's in. *Game Of Thrones*' Ian McShane reprises his role as Winston, Wick's slick, silver-tongued professional godfather. Watch out too for a cameo from Peter Serafinowicz as a sommelier with a deadly secret.

4 HIS ENEMIES ARE BADASS

Two of the sharp-shooters John Wick must take out are tough, resilient Cassian (rapper-actor Common) and the unflappable Ares (*Orange Is The New Black*'s Ruby Rose). Both possess the world-class skills to end Wick's life.

5 HE'S LOYAL TO HIS OLD PALS

Laurence Fishburne (Morpheus in *The Matrix*) appears as The Bowery King, a ruthless crime lord Wick cuts a deal with in New York. It's the first time Reeves and Fishburne have appeared on screen together since *The Matrix* trilogy.

***John Wick: Chapter Two* is in cinemas nationwide from today**

What the fans thought

This lot have seen *John Wick: Chapter Two* already, the lucky devils

"The stunts and combat scenes were spectacular, particularly the introduction in which John goes to retrieve his car. Another great, convincing performance by Keanu in the title role."

"I hope the John Wick legacy continues forever. There's a lot of room for action films this bold."

"Great old-school action movie for the weekend!"

"Amazingly FUNtastic, full of action. Keanu can still kick ass!"

"Excellent action movie. What a rush."

KEANU REEVES
JOHN WICK 2

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RADAR

MUSIC, FILM, TV & MORE – THIS WEEK'S ESSENTIAL NEW RELEASES

Best NEW tracks
And when to drop them

KATY PERRY

BEST FOR FEELING SASSY
ALEXANDRA SAVIOR
Mirage
Like something out of a 1960s French new wave movie, Savior slinks through this yé-yé-inspired slice of grown-up pop.

BEST FOR BRINGING THE FIRE
AVELINO
Energy
Grime MVPs Stormzy and Skepta both feature on this huge-sounding track from Tottenham rapper Avelino, which comes on like the natural successor to Dizzee Rascal's 'Bonkers'.

BEST FOR CHILLED AFTERNOONS
SUPERFOOD
Double Dutch
The slacker vibes are still evident with Birmingham's indie gang, but on their first taster of album two they serve up an unexpectedly synth-heavy and playful electro-baggy tune.

BEST FOR FEELING THE LOVE
COLD WAR KIDS
Love Is Mystical
A big, belting tune from the US indie rockers, which will have you believing in the power of love. Hopefully.

FOR MORE NEW MUSIC, GO TO NME.COM

BEST FOR DANCING AT WEDDINGS
KATY PERRY FEAT. SKIP MARLEY
Chained To The Rhythm
Katy goes disco on this glossy, gloriously basic banger. *"Turn it up, keep it on repeat"* are the lyrics, and also an order.

BEST FOR BEING SMOOTH
R.LUM.R
Love Less
Coming on like Justin Timberlake raving with Calvin Harris in Las Vegas, Florida's R.LUM.R – AKA Reginald Lamar Williams Jr – spikes his R&B with a subtle EDM twist.

BEST FOR DITCHING THE BLUES
STEVIE PARKER
Without You
Bristol vocalist Parker gets over her ex with grace and big, pulsing beats on this trip-hop meets Florence + The Machine-style slow-burning banger.

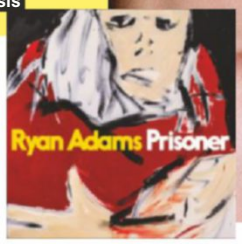
BEST FOR PLAYING AT A SEANCE
SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE
Threshold Of Light
Planning a mystical evening at home around a ouija board? Then this spooky finger-picked and harmony-packed mediation is just what you need.

BEST FOR BOUTS OF ENNUI
FATHER JOHN MISTY
Ballad Of The Dying Man
"We leave as clueless as we came", sighs Josh Tillman on this jaunty, piano-heavy song about how life teaches us nothing and everything is futile. Enjoy!

Saving crying Ryan

In which the singer-songwriter picks over the bones of his six-year marriage to actress Mandy Moore

RYAN ADAMS
Prisoner
★★★★☆
HEARTBREAK CATHARSIS



ALBUM OF THE WEEK

MORE SO THAN his alt-country covers of zeitgeisty non-country albums or his arbitrary forays into arena rock and heavy metal wish-fulfilment, what Ryan Adams truly excels at is documenting and dissecting failed relationships. With 'Prisoner', the 42-year-old singer-songwriter is (conservatively speaking) on his third such album dedicated to doing just that, this time picking over the bones of his six-year marriage to actress Mandy Moore, which ended in 2015.

Fortunately – both for us and, in a more cathartic sense, Adams himself – the passage of time between this album and 2004's 'Love Is Hell', or even his 2000 solo debut 'Heartbreaker', hasn't dulled his gift for creating art out of pain. 'Prisoner' isn't quite up to the career-best standards of its predecessors, but it's a remarkably focused and effective successor nonetheless.

Opener 'Do You Still Love Me?' sets the tone, if not quite the sound, for much of what follows, with a disconsolate Adams pleading, *"Is my heart blind and our love so strange?"* over a backing track equidistant between Whitesnake's 'Here I Go Again' and The Eagles' 'Victim Of Love'. As '80s power-ballad pastiches go, it's expertly done, though the rest of the album takes its cues from more tasteful, less bombastic sources, namely 'Tunnel Of Love'-era Bruce Springsteen (see the brilliant – and devastating – 'Haunted House') and Bruce Hornsby (the widescreen soft rock of 'Anything I Say To You Now').

Adams' pen doesn't hold back on the heartache – *"I see you with some guy / Laughing like you never even knew I was alive"* goes one pointed line on 'Shiver And Shake' – yet the overwhelming sentiment isn't pettiness or acrimony, but an acceptance that some things are built to fall apart: as 'To Be Without You' eloquently puts it, *"We are like a book and every page is so torn"*. It's a wisdom that comes from having been over this ground many times before, and while you wouldn't wish it on him again, the worst sort of anguish brings out the best in him. **Barry Nicolson**

PHOTO: RACHAEL WRIGHT

Electric dreams

Pharrell Williams' favourite new artist is Maryland's Maggie Rogers, whose debut EP of lush folktronica will have you in a trance

Ryan Adams

On truth, divorce and desires

This is a very raw and open album. Was writing it a cathartic exercise or did it all just pour out?
"I don't remember being aware of needing to hold back anything. I felt like I needed to tell a story – the story of how I felt, or what was happening internally at least, in the truest way possible. I wanted to avoid feeling like playing guitar on a soapbox… like some f**king bulls**t."

So where did the title come from?
"I think the theme of this record is that we're all prisoners of some desires, in that the very things we love are the things that hold us hostage and keep us trapped."

Do you think fans will be looking for 'clues' about your personal life?
"For me, the big shadow illuminating things for fans will be that this record is directly related to my divorce and to what was going on inside me – how I endured it and where I was in my emotions at that time – and they wouldn't be wrong. I believe in art, and it sounds so stupid, but I think it's more stupid to pretend things aren't happening to you and write some bland f**king useless bulls**t." **Andrew Trendell**

MAGGIE ROGERS

Now That The Light Is Fading EP

★★★★☆

FOLK FLOATY ELECTRONICA

LAST YEAR 22-year-old Maggie Rogers found herself in a rare position for an unsigned artist. There she was, a total unknown, in the middle of a serious swell of industry hype after praise was heaped on her lush folktronica sound by one of the biggest artists in the world. See, Pharrell Williams had casually dropped by New York University to deliver a music masterclass and when he heard Rogers' track 'Alaska' – which features on this fragile yet fulsome EP – he had to hold back the tears. He was moved, and you should be too.

'Now That The Light Is Fading' is US musician and producer Rogers' first extended collection of songs for a major label and it's a gossamer-light, glorious thing that, over the course of four songs, builds into something approaching pop perfection. Following in the footsteps of Bon Iver, Rogers melds natural and man-made sound, creating soul-stroking emotion in the process.

Opener 'Color Song' offers up a decidedly low-key start, with Rogers layering her voice over and over, while field recordings of chirruping birds play out in the distance. It's simple but stunning, recalling criminally underrated vocal trio Mountain Man, whose only album, 2010's gorgeous a cappella 'Made The Harbor' should be sought out by fans of Rogers, as well as band member Amelia Meath's current project, organic disco duo Sylvan Esso.

Williams' fave, 'Alaska', is up next. Like Haim on a hiking trip, its melancholy melody is at odds with its serious groove. When it comes to sonic textures, Rogers is experimental, but not at the risk of alienating the listener. This is mainstream but with an artful edge, with wobbly beats, twinkling keys and her signature stacked harmonies gracefully plaited together. 'Dog Years' takes her formula to perhaps a slightly too bombastic place, but on the twirling 'Better' the EP regains its hypnotic, classy vibe. Rogers' voice and instrumentation is impressive throughout, but it's on the production side that she really shines. In an industry where female producers are few and far between, she's a welcome new talent. **Leonie Cooper**

FOR FANS OF

Quiet and graceful

A majestic film of gentle moments and pregnant silences

MOONLIGHT
15 *Alex R Hibbert, Ashton Sanders, Trevante Rhodes*

★★★★★

EMOTION | SENSITIVE | GROWING UP

MOONLIGHT'S STATUS AS AN award-season champion – it's already taken a Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture (Drama) – rising above much starrier, more expensive films, is at odds with its quiet grace. This is a film of gentle moments and pregnant silences that tells a story the vast majority won't directly relate to, but does so in such a way that everyone can feel its pain.

The second film by writer-director Barry Jenkins (his first, 2008's *Medicine For Melancholy*, was well-reviewed but not widely seen) visits three stages in the life of Chiron, a boy growing up in Miami with his drug-addicted mother (Naomie Harris). Sensitive and shy, Chiron is teased for being gay, which he is. At nine, he's barely aware of what this means; as a teenager he's fighting furiously against it, while also nervously exploring it; as an adult he's buried his true self so deep he's almost suffocated it completely. Almost.

The authenticity with which Jenkins tells Chiron's story makes it surprising that this isn't autobiographical (it's actually based on a play, *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue* by Tarell Alvin McCraney). The emotions of Chiron's journey are huge, but Jenkins plays them all softly. Chiron, at all ages, rarely speaks, more often telling his story through wordless moments, as he watches those around him – a sympathetic drug dealer (Mahershala Ali) who befriends him as a boy; a childhood friend who reappears at every stage of Chiron's life – and tries to understand how they live in confidence and relative happiness, which he cannot find.

He's ever watchful of the world but too afraid to take part in it, only allowing himself fleeting moments of freedom and trust in others before curling back into his shell. When he does speak, Jenkins' script makes every word count. The heartbreaking question, "What's a f*****t?" uttered by a nine-year-old speaks volumes about how the world sees him and what he doesn't see of himself.

The three actors playing Chiron – Alex R Hibbert, Ashton Sanders, Trevante Rhodes – serve Jenkins majestically. It's far too early in the year to call *Moonlight* the best of 2017, but it would be among the finest of any year. **Olly Richards**

FOR FANS OF

BOYHOOD

BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD

Sympathetic drug dealer Juan (Mahershala Ali) gives spiritual guidance to Chiron (Alex R Hibbert)

Slick Wick

Keanu Reeves killing bad guys in his gruff kinda way

JOHN WICK: CHAPTER TWO
15 *Keanu Reeves, Common, Laurence Fishburne*
★★★★☆
BLOOD | GUNS | SURPRISES

IF YOU COULD ACCEPT THE initially flimsy premise – that Keanu Reeves' retired hitman was compelled to load up his guns again because a mobster's son killed his dog – 2015's original *John Wick* film was a slick and gripping action thriller.

This sequel, directed by Chad Stahelski, who also co-directed the original, offers similar thrills and spills on a grander scale. Here, Wick is forced out of retirement (again) when an Italian gangster redeems a blood oath against him. With gruff reluctance, Wick travels to Rome to kill the gangster's sister as prescribed, but when he succeeds, it sets off a chain reaction. Not only does her loyal bodyguard Cassian (Common) want payback, but the gangster sneakily places a $7 million open contract on Wick's head, as it would be "dishonourable" not to avenge his sister's death – even though he ordered it. When Wick returns to New York City, every assassin in town is after his blood.

Like the original film, *John Wick: Chapter Two* requires a hefty suspension of disbelief: many of its bloody murders take place in public places, but no one ever seems to report them. Nevertheless, Reeves' turn feels believable and dovetails entertainingly with some flashy supporting performances. He and Laurence Fishburne, playing a camp crime lord called The Bowery King, riff winningly on their old *The Matrix* chemistry. *Game Of Thrones*' Ian McShane, reprising his godfather-like role from the first film, is typically charismatic. But as ever, it's the action that dazzles. Stahelski choreographs the killing sprees with gruesome elegance and the flick contains genuinely tense and unpredictable moments.

John Wick: Chapter Two ends by beating a very clear path towards a third film. This kind of signposting sometimes feels like a cheat, but here it works because you'll leave feeling both satisfied and intrigued. Bring on Chapter Three. **Nick Levine**

PHOTOS: REX FEATURES

STRANGE BUT TRUE

The film's director Chad Stahelski was actually Reeves' stunt double in *The Matrix*.

THEY.

Raw and alternative R&B from Los Angeles

AFTER YEARS OF WRITING and producing for other acts, R&B duo Dante Jones and Drew Love got sick of the conventions, and decided to team up for their own material as THEY. Taking inspiration from Nirvana, Vampire Weekend and Timbaland, they've coined their own genre – 'Grunge & B'.

You've produced and written for artists including Chris Brown and Kelly Clarkson – how different is it working on your own debut album?
Love: "It's a very different process. It gives us the space to take a lot more risks. Trying to cater to someone else can really put you in a box and I don't believe that's where the magic happens. We wanted to start making things different, which didn't follow on those conventional musical lines."

You've known each other for a long time. What were you like as kids?
Jones: "We were both troublemakers. We didn't really listen to authority and didn't like to follow orders. We spent a lot of time getting suspended or in the principal's office, but I think that's what led us to be so different musically. We don't like to listen to people telling us to make music this way or that way – we just don't like to listen to anybody."

How does your love for Nirvana and indie music bleed into what you make?
Jones: "With Nirvana, I think there are a lot of parallels in the way that we structure songs and the catchy melodies. Indie has always been a huge influence for me. It's just a scene that I can always rely on to give me inspiration – I still use Vampire Weekend's latest album as a sonic point of reference."

Dante, not long ago you tweeted: "Our idols are ageing, this generation is hungry for visionaries." Are you the visionaries that music needs right now?
Jones: "I could never refer to myself as a visionary. I'm just trying to use my gifts in the best way I can and trying to work on music that I know I can be proud of. Only time will tell what titles we deserve." **Thomas Smith**

THEY. (l-r): Dante Jones and Drew Love

PHOTOS: ALEXANDER BLACK

The details

FROM: Los Angeles
BUY: Debut album 'NÜ Religion: Hyena' is out now

Best track

U-RITE

Big electro beats and sheer braggadocio combine for this catchy club hit.

Strange but true

Jones spent two months in prison as a teenager after he staged a fake robbery at a convenience store, using his hands as a 'gun'.

For fans of

Like this? Try this!

MIGUEL
Wildheart
The R&B star drew upon rock, hip-hop and soul for his far-reaching and innovative epic.

"We were both troublemakers as kids. We spent a lot of time getting suspended"

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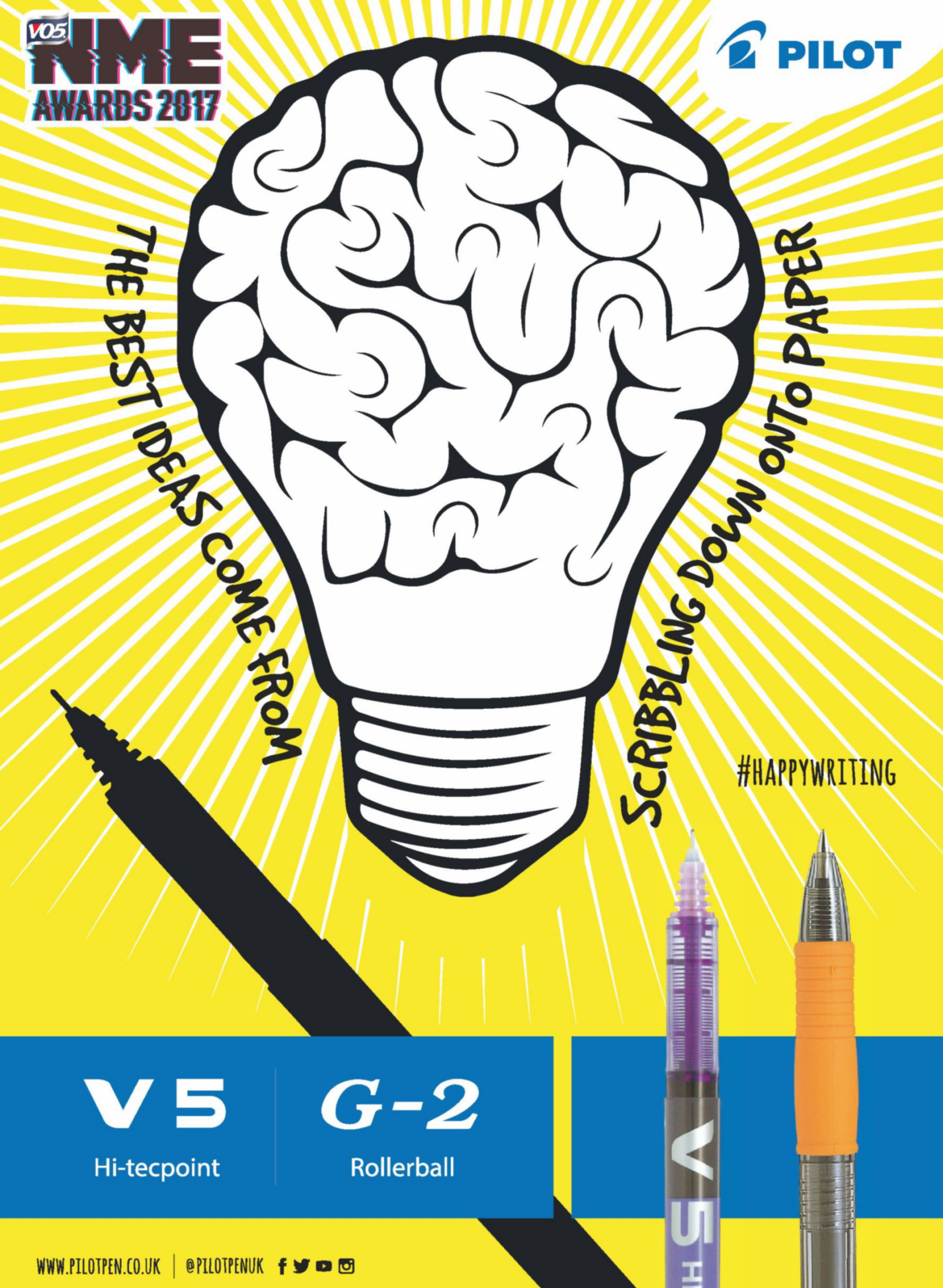

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THIS WEEK'S BEST TICKETS AND GIGS

One more time with feeling

Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds are bringing 'Skeleton Tree' to five massive UK venues

AN ARENA TOUR IS not where Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds fans were expecting to hear songs from 'Skeleton Tree' live for the first time. The Aussie band's 16th album emerged in September as their most harrowing and personal to date, shaped by Cave's teenage son tragically dying in an accident midway through its recording. "We've been in a strange place," Cave said last month at the Derwent Entertainment Centre in Australia, at the Bad Seeds' first gig since 2015. "We haven't played for a long time and it feels like suddenly I'm coming out blinking into the light." The sets they've played since have drawn on material from the Bad Seeds' 34-year career, with about a third of the set devoted to the new album, alongside classics like 'Red Right Hand' and 'Stagger Lee'.

PHOTO: PA/WIREIMAGE

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

Gothic rock troupe from Australia

ON SALE NOW

SEPTEMBER

Sun 24 BIC, Bournemouth
Mon 25 Arena, Manchester
Wed 27 SSE Hydro, Glasgow
Thu 28 Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham
Sat 30 The O2, London

TICKETS: £35-50

MAC DEMARCO

Goofy indie hero from Canada

AUGUST
Tue 29 O2 Academy, Newcastle
Wed 30 Usher Hall, Edinburgh

TELL ME MORE: The 26-year-old slacker is touring his third album 'This Old Dog', and although his two London gigs in May have sold out, he's added these two for those lucky enough to live further north.
TICKETS: £20.35-£22

RAT BOY

Won Best New Artist at the NME Awards last year

APRIL
Tue 25 O2 ABC, Glasgow
Wed 26 Stylus, Leeds
Fri 28 Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent
Sat 29 O2 Academy, Oxford
MAY
Mon 1 Waterfront, Norwich
Tue 2 O2 Institute, Birmingham
Wed 3 Bierkeller, Bristol
Fri 5 Academy, Manchester
Sat 6 Roundhouse, London

TELL ME MORE: The 20-year-old from Essex is touring his debut album 'Scum', with support from Spring King.
TICKETS: £14.30-£17.60

FORMATION

Cowbell-wielding dance-punk quintet

MARCH
Mon 20 The Green Door Store, Brighton
Tue 21 XOYO, London
Wed 22 Exchange, Bristol
Fri 24 Night & Day Café, Manchester
Sat 25 Brudenell Social Club, Leeds

TELL ME MORE: These guys aren't a Beyoncé song, they're a south London five-piece with tons of great tunes.
TICKETS: £8.96-£11

SAVOY MOTEL

Old-school Nashville band

MARCH
Tue 28 Stereo, Glasgow
Wed 29 Brudenell Social Club, Leeds
Thu 30 Soup Kitchen, Manchester
Fri 31 Rocking Chair, Sheffield
APRIL
Sun 2 Hare & Hounds, Birmingham
Mon 3 The Louisiana, Bristol
Wed 5 Moth Club, London

TELL ME MORE: This super-talented quartet deliver smooth sets where the balance of power never stays in any one member's hands for too long.
TICKETS: £7.70-£8.80

DUA LIPA

London-born 21-year-old on the cusp of pop stardom

APRIL
Wed 12 O2 Ritz, Manchester
Thu 13 O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire, London

TELL ME MORE: Lipa's forthcoming debut album has already spawned multiple bangers and she does them justice live.
TICKETS: £19.70-£24.20

THE WEEK'S BEST GIGS

THE 1975
Tue 21 The Dome, London

A J TRACEY
Sat 18 Concorde 2, Brighton
Sun 19 O2 Institute, Birmingham

BIFFY CLYRO
Mon 20 O2 Shepherd's Bush, London

DUSKY
Sat 18 Canal Mills, Leeds
Thu 23 Concorde 2, Brighton

ESBEN AND THE WITCH
Sat 18 Electrowerkz, London
Mon 20 Exchange, Bristol
Tue 21 Soup Kitchen, Manchester
Wed 22 The Hope & Ruin, Brighton

ESTRONS
Fri 17 The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry
Sat 18 Headrow House, Leeds

FISH TANK
Sat 18 Birthdays, London

FUFANU
Fri 17 Nice N Sleazy, Glasgow
Sat 18 Think Tank?, Newcastle
Mon 20 The Flapper, Birmingham
Tue 21 The Louisiana, Bristol
Wed 22 Kamio, London

INHEAVEN
Fri 17 The Haunt, Brighton
Sat 18 Esquires, Bedford
Wed 22 The Fulford Arms, York
Thu 23 The Venue, Derby

JULIA JACKLIN
Wed 22 The Green Door Store, Brighton
Thu 23 Soup Kitchen, Manchester

KAISER CHIEFS
Wed 22 Venue Cymru, Llandudno

KATE NASH
Fri 17 The Wedgewood Rooms, Portsmouth
Sat 18 The Haunt, Brighton
Mon 20 Village Underground, London

LADYHAWKE
Fri 17 Sub89 & The Bowery District, Reading
Sat 18 The Old Market, Hove

LISA MITCHELL
Tue 21 Omeara, London

LITTLE COMETS
Fri 17 O2 Academy, Liverpool
Sat 18 Leadmill, Sheffield

MENACE BEACH
Fri 17 Brudenell Social Club, Leeds

MICHAEL KIWANUKA
Tue 21 Union Chapel, London

PAIGEY CAKEY
Fri 17 Brixton Jamm, London
Mon 20 O2 Academy, Birmingham

PINEGROVE
Tue 21 The Fleece, Bristol
Wed 22 Scala, London
Thu 23 The Deaf Institute, Manchester

SLEIGH BELLS
Tue 21 Gorilla, Manchester
Wed 22 Electric Ballroom, London

SLØTFACE
Fri 17 Kamio, London
Sat 18 The Green Door Store, Brighton

SPRING KING
Fri 17 The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent
Sat 18 The Rescue Rooms, Nottingham

STEVIE PARKER
Sat 18 Oakford Social Club, Reading
Wed 22 Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

SUNDARA KARMA
Fri 17 The Garage, Glasgow
Sat 18 University Union, Leeds
Sun 19 3 Sixty, Reading
Mon 20 O2 Academy, Leicester
Wed 22 The Wedgewood Rooms, Portsmouth
Thu 23 University SU, Cardiff

S U R V I V E
Sun 19 The Fleece, Bristol
Mon 20 The Art School, Glasgow
Tue 21 The Deaf Institute, Manchester
Wed 22 Village Underground, London

TEGAN & SARA
Fri 17 O2 ABC, Glasgow
Sat 18 O2 Institute, Birmingham

TOM GRENNAN
Fri 17 Think Tank?, Newcastle

WHITE LIES
Thu 23 O2 Academy, Newcastle

WILD NOTHING
Sat 18 Moth Club, London
Wed 22 Hare & Hounds, Birmingham
Thu 23 Leaf On Bold Street, Liverpool

THE WYTCHES
Thu 23 Brixton Jamm, London

PHOTOS: REX FEATURES, ANDY FORD, JORDAN HUGHES, GETTY IMAGES

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THE FIRST SONG I CAN REMEMBER HEARING

MICHAEL JACKSON

Billie Jean

"I must have been five or six years old. I became a huge Michael Jackson fan. He's got so many great songs, but 'Billie Jean' stuck out for me. I thought, 'Wow, he's a cool dude.' He was a handsome, beautiful young man and so talented. He was a selfless man, because through his success he became quite isolated. It came at a price."

MICHAEL JACKSON

THE SONG I WISH I'D WRITTEN

IAN BROWN

F.E.A.R

"My friend got me into him. We were in the car, driving to the UK Championships, and he said, 'Listen to this song.' Every sentence starts with F-E-A-R. I thought, 'This geezer is a lyrical genius. He's really thought about that one' – or maybe it's instinctive."

TRACY CHAPMAN

THE FIRST SONG I FELL IN LOVE WITH

TRACY CHAPMAN

Fast Car

"It's a bit of a driving song and I love driving. I was in my first decent car and I was 17, 18 and I remember this song coming on and I thought, 'This is a buzz!' I always have the CD in my car."

THE SONG I DO AT KARAOKE

"I did karaoke once at a club when I'd had a few drinks. I said to myself, 'You will never, ever do that again.' It was embarrassing. I actually can't remember what I sang, but I'm not a very good singer because whenever I sing people say, 'You're a terrible singer.' So that's why I don't sing. Once I tried playing guitar, but for me it was like learning another language – I thought, 'I ain't got time for this!' It didn't really float my boat."

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THE SONG I LISTEN TO WITH MY SON

TRAIN

Drops Of Jupiter

"It's one of my favourite songs – they were on *Sunday Brunch* with us last month. I listen to it in the car with my nine-year-old son – he loves it too and we play it five or six times on the trot."

THE MUSICIAN THAT REMINDS ME OF HOME

ROD STEWART

"He lives not far from where I live in Essex and when I was younger I remember my dad being into Rod Stewart, Deacon Blue and people like that. My mum and dad were quite into their music – Tina Turner, Simply Red, Phil Collins. They were quite funky, my mum and dad. They were always out – social animals."

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

EMINEM

Lose Yourself

"Sometimes you have to get so lost in something that you go into autopilot and start doing amazing things, but you have to be in the zone to do it. That's what this song really means to me – if people can get to that space in their life where they experience that, then they've had a good life."

THE FIRST GIG I WENT TO

OASIS

Knebworth, 1996

"There were so many people there and everyone looked like Noel Gallagher! I went with my friend Stuart – he was a good lad. We went there and had a laugh."

LAST WORD

The wisdom of the *NME* archives

THIS WEEK

RICHEY EDWARDS

Manic Street Preachers

February 15, 1992

"The only time you're truly happy is when you're really young, before you want anything. We just used to play football and games of… war."

INTERVIEW: LEONIE COOPER. PHOTOS: REX FEATURES

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